

## SQUAREUPB.C. Report

to the Annual General Meeting

of the B.C. Square & Round Dance Federation, Penticton -- August 8, 2014

For those who are unaware, SQUAREUPB.C. is a marketing initiative of the Federation chaired by Brian Elmer of West Kelowna, who serves in an appointed position. A marketing approach requires that attention be given to designing an attractive product or service that fulfills the needs and wants of a defined population demographic, presenting it at a desirable place or location for a representative value-based price before launching the promotion or advertising.

### *The Year in Review*

Since the object of this report is to explain the various tasks performed by SQUAREUPB.C. since August of 2013 it will include a review of some of the information presented at the Board of Directors Meeting at Abbotsford on April 5.

The report presented at the April B.O.D. meeting can be found at the following link:

<http://squaredance.bc.ca/articals/bod2014/squareupbc.pdf>

In brief, that report identified the various internet pages maintained by SQUAREUPB.C. They include Facebook, two Twitter pages, a blog and “landing pages” to which interested persons are sent if one of our paid ads interests them. Links to all services were provided in the B.O.D. report.

The 2013/2014 dance season included two major internet and social media paid advertising campaigns--one in the Fall and another in January. Specifically, ads appeared when people searched dance-related topics on Google and similarly on Facebook. The Facebook strategy went a step further whereby the ads also appeared in the information timelines—called the “news feed” —as people viewed their pages. Some advertising of our youth dance clubs ran only on Google search, largely targeting parents. Overall, 2,237 “clicks” were made on our ads by people wanting to learn more about our activity.

A Winter campaign in January proved to engage people very well. Overall, 1,857 clicks were made on our ads and several inquiries came in by e-mail directly to SQUAREUPB.C. People were referred to specific clubs relative to the area in

which they live. In addition, a dialogue was undertaken with many people as a result of inquiries they posted on the Federation's Facebook page. Since that time, our Facebook page has jumped to 177 "likes" by people favouring our page.

One of our most popular Facebook articles was a write-up and video about Williams Lake dancers square dancing in snowshoes that resulted in 114 views.

It was through our Facebook page that a woman in Cranbrook, looking to have square dancing at her husband's 40<sup>th</sup> birthday party, was connected to Verne Thompson, a former caller living in that city. The party was said to be a great success. Cranbrook no longer has an active dance club.

Our Twitter pages have 47 people following @BCFedDanceNews and 19 are following @BCFedLive. The use of hashtags in messages is helping to reach outside the dance community to promote ourselves.

Our online promotional video, Dancing Keeps You Young—perhaps our most influential marketing tool—has accumulated over six and a half thousand views since it was first posted. See it at: [www.DancingKeepsYouYoung.ca](http://www.DancingKeepsYouYoung.ca)

Back in November, an opportunity was taken to serve you better with regard to marketing skills through participation in the Okanagan Marketing Summit. Much was learned about advertising in the traditional media (radio, tv, newspapers, etc.) and also about utilizing social media advertising and promotion.

Our Federation was represented in a full page colour advertisement purchased in the Festival 2014, Ottawa, convention program book. It wished the dancers a fun time.

From a marketing perspective, it continues to be difficult to promote and advertise our recreation when many clubs need to adapt their lesson offerings to meet the needs and wants of the next generation. The challenge we're facing was clearly identified in the extensive paid research conducted by the Callerlab Foundation and presented in the year 2000. What we deliver in a dance instruction service (product) has to match and fulfill those needs and wants, especially the need for considerably less instruction time in order to become a square dancer. Those clubs that have adopted the 10-lesson, 46-call West Coast Square Dance Program have made inroads in that area. A web site dedicated to the program can be found at: [www.WestCoastSquareDance.com](http://www.WestCoastSquareDance.com)

## *Image Re-Branding*

In the U.S., there's a new initiative to "re-image" square dancing. The organization spearheading the effort is "A.R.T.S.," The Alliance for Round, Traditional and Square Dance. (Their home web page can be found at: <http://www.arts-dance.org> – in the left column, look for the article on re-imaging.) At this point, they have issued two surveys to gather opinions and plan to select a marketing company that specializes in re-imaging an organization.

Our image does need an overhaul. As relayed by presenter Jim Hensley in a seminar at the Federation's 2005 Festival in Chilliwack, the research for Callerlab reported that "We have badly underestimated the image issue we have. Research showed that 90% of the focus groups surveyed thought that square dancing was done out in the country, in a barn with fiddle music, with the ladies dressed in puffy clothing!"

We have to exercise caution, though, because concluding comments resulting from the image research read: "If the dance community launches an active marketing program without first changing the things that need changing, it runs a risk of bringing new dancers in to discover the same old same old." (Focus Group Survey of 2000, closing comments—see: <http://www.callerlabfoundation.org/Portals/34/Foundation%20Documents/200201-FocusGroupSurveyRpt-Full.pdf>).

We wish the A.R.T.S. group well in the re-imaging endeavour but a dance instruction program that's actually "new and improved" and serving the needs and wants of the customer has to in place before repackaging our recreation for sale to the public.

Here are links to the online surveys, should you wish to participate:

1<sup>st</sup> survey: <http://fluidsurveys.com/surveys/jim-h55/arts-reimaging-square-dance/>

2<sup>nd</sup> survey: <http://fluidsurveys.com/surveys/jim-h55/arts-re-imaging-square-dance-2/>

*Suggestion of a Home-Grown Image Re-Branding Campaign in B.C.*

The SQUAREUPB.C. report to the April B.O.D. meeting in Abbotsford suggested that we in B.C., under the Federation, might very well entertain image re-branding but only if our clubs first modernize and adapt for the new customer.

A re-branding campaign might utilize conventional media such as television. We could update our image to “cool, youthful, fun and easy-to-learn,” re-positioning the square dance as a fitness activity—something particularly sought-after by the Boomer generation. Casual attire can be seen as very acceptable. Above all, we want to sell “a great experience!”

It was suggested that community gaming grants of up to \$250,000 are possibly available to the Federation (even though we’re not a registered charity) to tell British Columbians about the many benefits of our activity.

Also, Shaw Cablesystems establishes partnerships with non-profit groups. For a minimal investment, Shaw will produce a top-quality public service announcement for a non-profit (for instance, a 30 second tv commercial) and insert it into various cable channels.

### *Upcoming Paid Internet and Social Media Campaigns*

In early August, SQUAREUPB.C. advertising will begin to appear utilizing Google Search and Facebook and some other possible approaches. The paid ads will only show in cities and surrounding areas where new dancer sessions are taking place. It’s one of two campaigns planned for the Fall and early in the New Year for which a budget of \$5,000 has been set.

The procedure is that people will see our ads on their computer screen or mobile device and hopefully be curious enough to “click” on the ad. At that point we are billed for that possible new dancer prospect and their screen will connect to one of the “landing pages” that are strictly promotional in design.

Apart from seeing an influential message with photos and videos, the person can scroll down to reveal all our clubs in B.C. that are conducting new dancer sessions. New round dancer sessions are welcomed for posting as well as square dancing. Each club listing will show session details in a promotional manner, complete with phone and e-mail contacts. See one of the landing pages at:

[www.TakeMeDancing.squaredance.bc.ca](http://www.TakeMeDancing.squaredance.bc.ca)

At the time of this report, prepared in mid-July, only 8 B.C. clubs have submitted their new dancer session information for the campaign. If you'll have new dancer sessions, send your information to: [brian@squaredance.bc.ca](mailto:brian@squaredance.bc.ca).

Where clubs have a web site, that address will be shown. If you have such a web site, it's strongly recommended that you establish a page on it strictly for the new dancer prospect. For example, such a page for the Kamloops Square Dancers, with a promotional message and information, can be viewed at:

<http://www.kamloopssquaredancers.squaredance.bc.ca/newdancers.html>

This is much preferred over sending a new dancer prospect to the general club web page that usually has content not specifically for the newcomer.

Through the toll-free INFOLINE, Federation and SQUAREUPB.C. e-mail addresses and comments posted on Facebook, inquiries will be processed and new dancer prospects directed to the club or clubs nearest them that offer new dancer sessions.

If your club plans new dancer sessions in January, 2015, please e-mail the details by early December to [brian@squaredance.bc.ca](mailto:brian@squaredance.bc.ca).

### *Notable Initiatives*

New approaches to engaging newcomers in our recreation are always welcomed. Once again last September, the Westsyde Squares of West Kelowna videotaped new dancers on their first "free" dance nights for posting on YouTube. It's a good way to heighten the excitement at new dancer sessions and give the newcomers some video they can direct their friends and relatives to watch. In particular, you might enjoy the 11-minute Sept. 9, 2013 session at:

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=1E1p2eQK4pM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1E1p2eQK4pM)

See all the videos at: [www.youtube.com/user/WestsydeSquares](http://www.youtube.com/user/WestsydeSquares)

In late 2013, Region 9--the Thompson-Shuswap area, saw the launch of the brand new dance magazine, the "Well Rounded Square." Dancer Jean Wood of Salmon Arm is the editor and the publication is very nicely designed and full of relevant content. The magazine actually serves the greater region of the south-central interior. Jean can be contacted at:

[wellroundedsquarenews@gmail.com](mailto:wellroundedsquarenews@gmail.com)

Wishes for continued success go out to those clubs working hard to build awareness of our recreation such as the one in Williams Lake that has accessed various media to get the word out through unsolicited press releases. A recent release about their Spring Jamboree was published June 4<sup>th</sup> in the Williams Lake Tribune newspaper. It was very well written and included several photos. SQUAREUPB.C. has brought it to the attention of the dance community and beyond through Facebook and Twitter postings.

### *Looking Ahead/Promotional Tools*

At the time of this report preparation, SQUAREUPB.C. received an e-mail inquiry from the Pacific National Exhibition asking for square dance participation at a particular venue on the fairgrounds. The assistant manager of the Agriculture Division has asked if one or more groups could do square dance demonstrations, with a participatory element, throughout the Fair, August 20 to Sept. 1.

The request was referred to the Joint Promotion Committee of the Fraser Valley Square & Round Dance Association and the Vancouver & District Caller Teachers Association.

Square and Round Dance Awareness Week is planned to take place in the third week of September. Clubs and Associations should be planning what they might do to build awareness of our great recreation.

Do remember that a couple of our most basic communications tools are the toll-free INFOLINE at 1-800-335-9433 and e-mail through [info@squaredance.bc.ca](mailto:info@squaredance.bc.ca). Also, our web site, aimed primarily at the dance community, can be found at: [www.squaredance.bc.ca](http://www.squaredance.bc.ca)

In your promotions, remember to tell of the 10-minute promotional video, aimed at Baby Boomers, called “Dancing Keeps You Young.” Send people to it online at: [www.DancingKeepsYouYoung.ca](http://www.DancingKeepsYouYoung.ca)

Also consider showing in your advertising/promotion/publicity our promotional “landing pages,” such as [www.TakeMeDancing.squaredance.bc.ca](http://www.TakeMeDancing.squaredance.bc.ca), specifically detailing the many benefits of square dancing.

A printable version of the tri-fold “Prescription for Better Health” brochure, developed by your Federation, is still available online at:

[www.BetterHealth.squaredance.bc.ca](http://www.BetterHealth.squaredance.bc.ca)

It’s not a poster but a double-sided document intended to be folded vertically into three equal-sized sections. The research told us that a “hot button” in seeking the attention of Baby Boomers is activity benefitting their fitness and health.

Many traveling dancers are turning to [www.WheresTheDance.com](http://www.WheresTheDance.com) to find dance events. Consider submitting your dance events to this free listings service.

### ***Please Preserve an Essential Marketing Tool***

There is consideration being given to closing down the Federation's 1-800 toll-free INFOLINE number. Such an action is seen as terribly wrong. A phone contact is an essential marketing tool, especially a toll-free line for a province our size. We’re selling a dance instruction service and people generally have questions relative to a service. They want a personal touch. If you’re reserving at a restaurant—perhaps wanting a table at the window, making an appointment with your doctor or hair stylist, you most often pick up the phone.

Promotion and advertising campaigns with a broad reach, such as the upcoming province-wide paid internet and social media advertising, need to have a central phone contact where people in the greater region can call for information. If we gain a person's interest, it is a phone number that can be given to them quickly in order to keep them "on the hook." Furthermore, talking to a “real person” will probably “seal-the-deal” and convince them to attend new dancer sessions.

We've got to do some future-thinking about our marketing--it's long since time for vision. If you ask why the INFOLINE hasn’t seen greater use, we can point to the image problem for our recreation--including dancewear that was popular 40 years ago, or the monolithic nature of the instruction--needing a commitment of about 60 hours to attain the Mainstream program. Why would people phone to inquire about an activity that, at least in their perception, doesn’t meet their needs or captures their interest?

As we begin to rebuild our dance offering to suit the next generation, we've got to maintain a people-to-people phone contact. We have to give the opportunity for personal contact in a people-oriented recreation such as ours. We're selling a dance instruction service that involves people's feelings, needs and wants -- ours is not an

inanimate object that you should be forced to only explore online, devoid of the “human touch” of speech and hearing.

The toll-free number is embedded in all of our marketing and it has to stay there if only to be used more frequently in the near future once we build greater interest in our activity.

SQUAREUPB.C. is available to assist regional promotion committees or even club promotion persons. Contact Brian Elmer by phone at 250-768-2694 or e-mail [brian@squaredance.bc.ca](mailto:brian@squaredance.bc.ca)

This concludes the SQUAREUPB.C. report to the Annual General Meeting.

Respectfully submitted,  
Brian Elmer, West Kelowna  
SQUAREUPB.C. Chairperson